

A 'Just in Case' M.O. by rosekings

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Summary:

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“What are we supposed to do with all of these?”

A 'Just in Case' M.O.

Author's Note:

This is just the way I headcanon the conversation that takes place the morning after El closes the gate, about what to do with all of Will's drawings. Originally posted on my [Tumblr](#).

The Byers' house is a mess. The day after...*everything*, once everybody wakes up from a night of fitful sleep, they set to work cleaning up. They all slept over - the kids, Hopper, Nancy, Jonathan, even Steve. Crashing wherever they could, they passed out and clung to whoever was nearest when the nightmares got too bad. But now they're awake, and the house has to be put to rights.

Of course, the first things that need to be torn down are the numerous Mind Flayer tunnel drawings coating the house from floor to ceiling. Nancy peels one off, flakes of blue crayon falling to the ground.

"What are we supposed to do with all of these?" Lucas asks. Everyone in the living room looks to each other questioningly.

"Burn them, right?" Mike suggests. Nancy remembers he stayed up, fighting his exhaustion, until Hopper and Eleven returned, and then he collapsed on the couch with El. *He might be in love*, Nancy thinks.

"What else would we do?" Jonathan says. Right now, Nancy can barely look him in the eye - not with Steve standing nearby and the events of the past couple of days fresh in her mind.

What else would they do? The other option appears in her head, and she can tell everyone else is thinking it, but nobody wants to acknowledge it.

"I know what you're thinking, Hop," Joyce says, looking up at him. "If we keep them...we would never be able to forget, to go back to normal. They'd be a constant reminder of what happened." Hopper just shrugs.

"Mom, you know 'normal' isn't a word any of us can use anymore," Will says. "And...you never know what's next."

"Son of a bitch, Will's right," Dustin adds.

"What are you talking about?" asks Max, the redhead that kind of came out of nowhere. Nancy wonders what happened to her stepbrother, Billy. Last she heard, he was drugged and on the very floor she's standing on, but he's nowhere to be found. They all assume he walked home.

"If that Mind Flayer Shadow Monster thing comes back," Nancy explains. "This is twice now that the Upside Down has interfered with our lives. Just because Eleven closed the gate doesn't mean something bad won't happen again."

"But she shut it," Max protests. "She sealed it up and all those dogs are gone and that thing is out of Will. Why do you think-"

"Max, before you got here, I was the last person to join this wild shitfest," Steve says. "After last year - I thought it was over. And it wasn't. So if there's even a chance that it could happen again..." He shrugs. "I'm just saying, having that map is a good piece of leverage."

Max falls silent. They all exchange glances, and for the first time in a while, Nancy looks at Jonathan. They both know the right answer, they know what needs to happen. Nancy's eyes slide to Hopper, and she can tell he's already made up his mind.

"Keep them."

Everyone turns to Eleven. The girl hasn't even washed off her punk makeup yet (where did she *get it*?) but Nancy can see how drained she is. Her right hand is intertwined tightly with Mike's left.

"I closed the gate. But the monster is still alive. I don't...I don't want it to happen again."

Hopper pulls a page off the wall and holds it up. "I want to burn them as much as the rest of you, but you all know we can't. We *can't*, because everything we do is by a '*just in case*' M.O." He tears down several more and tosses them to the ground. "We'll lock them up and

no one ever has to set eyes on them again.”

And just like that, everyone agrees. Even Max, whose utter disbelief shows on her face, and Joyce, who hates it but knows that this time, head over heart is pertinent. They can hope and dream all they want, but deep down, there’s the persistent tendril of doubt that everything will restart and they’ll be going through it a third damn time. Nancy thinks that maybe knowing they have this map and these records will help her sleep a little better.

So they tear them all down. Dustin and Lucas grab a bunch of plastic bags and label them according to the general area of each bundle of pages. Lover’s Lake, the Hub, the hole that Hopper jumped into - all scribbled in black permanent marker. Everyone helps sort and bag, and an hour later, they have several giant stacks of resealable bags stuffed with black and blue drawings. They haul them out to the empty shed where, after disposing of the spotlights and chairs used during Will’s interrogation, they shove them in the back and load the rest of the shed’s junk in front.

Nancy’s chewing her nails as Hopper slides a thick chain through the doors. The padlock resounds through the air with a heavy click, a sound of finality. He tosses the key to Joyce and gives each and every one of them a piercing gaze.

“These pages don’t exist until we need them, if we ever do. Got it?”

Though everyone nods and ambles back inside, Nancy catches Hopper’s eye and she knows they’re thinking the same thing. Those drawings will *always* exist, in the back of everyone’s head. Nancy knows better. Hopper knows better. And, whether the others like it or not, they know better, too. They all know that the higher your hopes, the harder your fall. *But it’s a ‘just in case’ M.O.*, Nancy thinks.